

Testimony of Aundré Bumgardner
Groton Town Councilor & Former State Representative, 41st District
Groton, CT
aundrebumgardner@gmail.com

IN SUPPORT OF SB 4, AN ACT CONCERNING THE CONNECTICUT CLEAN AIR ACT
Before the Environment Committee & Transportation Committee
March 11, 2022

Co-chairs Senator Cohen, Senator Haskell, Representative Gresko, Representative Lemar, Ranking Members Senator Somers, Senator Miner, Representative Harding, Representative Carney and members of the Environment Committee and Transportation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to address this joint committee public hearing today.

My name is Aundré Bumgardner, I am a resident of the City of Groton, currently serve on the Groton Town Council and previously represented the 41st House District in the Connecticut General Assembly. I respectfully submit legislative testimony in **support** of **SB 4, AN ACT CONCERNING THE CONNECTICUT CLEAN AIR ACT - to reduce carbon emissions by expanding public and private utilization of electric vehicles in Connecticut to protect human health and the environment.**

According to the Connecticut Council of Environmental Quality, **Transportation contributes 38 percent of Connecticut's economy-wide emissions of greenhouse gases (GHG).** UCONN Avery Point's CIRCA, located here in Groton, anticipates sea level will be 20 inches higher than the national tidal datum in Long Island Sound by 2050. Our most vulnerable cities and coastal communities will be hit hard by the climate crisis. We must take action now by accelerating mitigation and adaptation strategies like those proposed in SB 4.

I am writing in support of proposed changes to the Connecticut Hydrogen and Electric Automobile Rebate (CHEAPR) program which currently excludes electric bicycles from eligibility for rebates. I respectfully suggest several amendments to the SB-4 bill language- the first is to increase the proposed cap on eligible bicycles from \$2,000 to *at least* \$3,000 to be able to include more of the car replacing electric cargo bikes and the inventory typically sold by local bike shops like Pedego in Groton and Mystic Cycle Center. Since the pandemic, there has been a significant uptick in recreational cycling along our scenic bicycle routes such as the Eastern Shoreline Path and incredible bicycle trails such as those found at Bluff Point State Park.

The second is to add two seats to the advisory committee - one for a Bicycle & Pedestrian Advocacy Organization and for the PURA chair. I suggest the amount of the rebate increased for EJ communities and LMI individuals from \$500 to *at least* \$1,000. Finally, I suggest the definition of EJ communities to be tied to census tract. In Groton, I'm leading our council's efforts to write a complete streets policy and working very closely with Bike Groton, our local Bike/Ped advocacy organization for the Groton/Mystic/Stonington area. Without including

Bicycle and Pedestrian safety activists in our discussions, we'd be doing a disservice to the communities most disproportionately impacted by our policy decisions.

Additionally, I strongly support legislative language requiring that all the state's light duty vehicles be zero-emission by 2030 as well as 100% zero-emission school buses in Environmental Justice communities by 2030 with the rest of the state by 2035. With the state goal of no longer procuring, purchasing or leasing diesel fueled transit buses by January 1, 2024, SB 4 will take great steps to improve air quality in Environmental Justice Communities.

I also commend both committees for proposing to accelerate the adoption of electric vehicles in Connecticut. As the bill's language continues to be amended, I hope the committees pay close attention to the condominium association and apartment complexes provisions included in the bill. Ensuring that all homeowners, as well as renters, can safely charge their vehicle will bring us much closer to decarbonizing our transportation system. I hope you also consider that there are several communities served by municipal electric utilities like Groton, a superior model to private, investor owned utilities, that would require electricity to be provided by those utilities. Many ratepayers have tried unsuccessfully installing solar in our community and I'd hate to see the same happen to our current and future electric vehicle owners.

Lastly, I respectfully suggest that the committees amend SB 4's language to state that the Connecticut Department of Transportation will utilize electric locomotives July 1, 2023. Metro-North and ConnDOT currently operate the Danbury, Waterbury and Hartford Lines, and Shoreline East using diesel locomotives. We must electrify our commuter trains, especially where there are existing catenary and electrified tracks to reduce carbon dioxide and nitrous oxide emissions.

If passed SB 4 would create electric equity by including individuals who can't or don't want to take on the financial burden of car ownership, greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution from car travel, and help parents and families of all incomes travel easily and safely.

A decarbonized transportation system can help reduce the need for multi car ownership, help improve transportation equity by making sure people of all incomes are able to get where they need to go, and it promotes the health and wellness of LMI families in both urban and rural settings.

Thank you very much for your consideration of this matter. If there are questions, concerns or committee members require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Respectfully submitted,

Aundré Bumgardner

Groton Town Councilor and former State Representative for the 41st District